

## **“Can You See the Jesus in Me?”**

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Oklahoma Family Empowerment Center  
August 2016

The Oklahoma Family Empowerment Center’s (OFEC) Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Initiative is thriving and moving in a fruitful direction. We have been able to establish a productive way to organize our community stakeholders. We also have been able to cause effective changes in areas that have shown to increase DMC—i.e., arrests.

Our strategic community stakeholder teams are divided into three taskforces:

- Law Enforcement and School Personnel Taskforce
  - Purpose: To establish Effective Policing Interacting with Youth (EPIY) training for Tulsa Police Department (TPD) and surrounding area officers, and to establish training for Tulsa Public Schools and surrounding area resource officers and school administrators and teachers.
- System Taskforce
  - Purpose: To work with the Family Justice Center’s key decision-makers to collaboratively address any instance within the juvenile justice system that is showing areas of disproportionate representation of minority youth.
- Community Taskforce
  - Purpose: To work through community centers, community housing, and other community resources to provide law and civil rights information to the community, to provide an area to hear the concerns of the community, and to provide community resource information to the community.

The impact and change that OFEC can help to effect extends to our own staff team as well. Angelia Cherry, OFEC office assistant, shares this testimony.



I grew up in a dysfunctional family, where drugs or alcohol were used on a daily basis. I was introduced to drugs at age 13 by my brother and boyfriend. I was looking for love in anything or anybody.

I had two kids, married by age 19 and divorced by age 26. I moved to Tulsa and met a guy. Still looking for love in the wrong place. I had two more children. At the same time, I found myself so deep in the drug life.

I lost everything. My children, my home. Was arrested on a charge of drug possession. It wasn’t until I lost my children that I realized I had a problem. I did four years of probation. I did drug court in order to get my children back. I was always able to keep a job.

In the process I found God again—a church home with a church family that loves me unconditionally. I lost my job in 2010 from a couple of on-the-job injuries. And I asked God, “Why me?” And he said, “Why not you? I have something for you to do.”

I moved into a house that was in the heart of drug city, and God kept me. I lost my car, and God kept me. Again I asked, “God, why me?” And he said, “Why not you? I have a job for you to do.” That’s when I said, “Okay, God, use me then.”

I lost my home, moved in with my mother, started to give my time to the church. Didn’t have any money to give for tithes and offering, but what I did have was time. So I started serving at the Spirit Café and helping out with the Spirit Seniors.

Along the way, I found the purpose that God has on my life. In 2012, God started showing me favor. He gave back everything that was taken and has given me more than I had. He has blessed me with my health that I might serve, a vehicle that was much needed, and a home that is paid off.

As of January 2016, my purpose is to serve God, family, church, and the community.

I work for Oklahoma Family Empowerment Center. I give back by serving at the day center, spending time with our seniors on Thursdays for prayer and fellowship. I also hold a Celebrate Recovery program. I serve a summer food program every year. But most of all, I thank God for saving me and giving me a better life than I had before. Because without him, my life is nothing.

At times I sit back and look at my life and say to myself, “If I can help one person, all that I have done wouldn’t be in vain.” Now I can say that I found love in the right place. Can you see the Jesus in me?

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*The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at [nbacares.org/incubate](http://nbacares.org/incubate) or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at [awatkins@nbacares.org](mailto:awatkins@nbacares.org).*